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THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY

Entered as second-class matter November 18, 1907, at the Post Office, New York, N. Y., under the Act of Congress of March 1, 1879

VOL. VII

NEW YORK, APRIL 18, 1914

No. 23

In the Yale Alumni Weekly for March 20 appears an article entitled *Is Yale's Democracy in Danger?*, by Professor Robert N. Corwin, '87, Chairman of the Committee on Entrance Examinations, Sheffield Scientific School. In an introductory paragraph it is asserted that the one question ever uppermost where Yale men get together is "How about Yale's Democracy?", and that the most important plank in the Yale platform to Yale alumni is "equal privileges to all men equally qualified". The author then says that, according to figures recently published in the Yale News, figures based on a census of the whole undergraduate body, the ratio of the number of students in Yale College who prepared in special fitting schools to the number whose preparation was gained in high schools is 900 to 365. Moreover, a comparison of the figures for each class shows a ratio which indicates an increase in favor of the schoolboy from the private school.

Professor Corwin continues thus:

The special fitting school is, however, a luxury beyond the means of those not in what are usually called easy circumstances. In fact, unless a father's income is large enough to bring him into that fortunate body affected by the income tax, he can hardly place his boy or boys at one of the better private schools. The class, therefore, from which some two-thirds of the undergraduate body of Yale College are drawn is relatively small, and it seems evident that some agency is at work to limit Yale's clientele to this social stratum.

The explanation Professor Corwin finds in the four-year requirement in Latin for admission to Yale.

Most high schools, except those within Yale's sphere of influence¹, have either dropped or side-tracked this subject. It seems, therefore, indisputable that the rigid maintenance of this requirement by Yale College is restricting admission from the high school, and encouraging that from the special fitting school. . . . This requirement, whatever its avowed purpose, seems to favor in its operation a privileged class, and the results immediately prompt the question, "How about Yale's democracy? Is the education offered at Yale national in its scope, and its privileges universal in their application?"

¹In the same issue Mr. Walter Camp is quoted as saying "When Yale is not at the top, her graduates want to know what we are doing to get there again and they don't want to know much else".

²Professor Corwin's view does not survey mankind from intellectual China to Peru. He seems even to overlook New York State!

Can Yale maintain its claim of democracy in the face of these results?"³

This article might be passed over in silence, were its author not Chairman of a Committee on Admissions of an important School. "Equal privileges to all men equally qualified" is one of those platitudinous statements to which—provided it really applies—no one can take exception. To be sure, one should make certain that a platitude applies. The rest of Professor Corwin's article is an elaborate proof, by the author himself, that the graduates of the special fitting schools and those of the High Schools of New England (at least as portrayed by Professor Corwin), are not equally qualified; hence, they should not, on his own platform, receive equal privileges. What Professor Corwin proves, if we accept his article at its face value, is that the High Schools of New England are inferior to the Private Schools of New England. Now, to me, at least two courses of action might result from the material presented by Professor Corwin (if we accept it at its face value). One would be for Yale College to say to the High Schools of New England: 'You are manifestly of inferior quality: you are manifestly incapable at present of preparing students adequately for admission to Yale College. We suggest to you that you had better mend your ways. Once the whole business of preparing boys for College was in the hands of Private Schools. You invaded their field: you undertook, *vestra sponte, immo vero ultro*, to prepare boys for College. You drove many a Private School in New England to the wall⁴. You should play the game to its end, and pay the cost: it is your business, we repeat, so to improve your course that boys prepared by you shall be qualified to enter Yale College'. The other course is the one urged by Professor Corwin—to promote democracy at Yale by reducing the standards for admission, by lowering the intellectual level of those admitted to Yale College, and so to make Yale a *common* carrier indeed! Which of these two courses would seem the easier any child can say. Professor Corwin's proposal to eliminate the

³I make no comment on Professor Corwin's insiduously unfair use of the term democracy: unfairness is none the less unfair even when unintentional.

⁴This was formally and earnestly stated in a paper at a meeting of The New England Classical Association, three or four years ago.

Latin requirement is of a piece with the tendency exhibited so often by College men to take the line of least resistance—to chime in with the doctrine that the way to cure every pedagogical ill, real or fancied, is to modify the requirements for admission to College, to make it easier, ever easier to get into College without the doing of real intellectual work, without the furnishing of the mind with real ideas.

There is not space here to marshal the available evidence that the students who enter College without Latin and those who enter with it are not equally qualified. Our readers will find it an interesting and instructive task to go through their files of *THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY* and gather together the array of testimony we have had on this subject, some of it from scientific men themselves. *Nisi fallor*, they will find somewhere an utterance from another Yale professor in sharp collision with Professor Corwin's.

I have long thought that the finest example of oxymoron in the world's utterances is the shibboleth 'democratic education'. What a contradiction in terms these two words are! To educate a man or a woman is to make of him or her something better than is the man or woman uneducated: just in so far as education educates it adds to the glorious roll of the world's true aristocrats.

Sed hactenus haec. I shall conclude with some recent utterances in the public press. The following editorial remarks appeared in the *New York Times*, on Friday, March 27:

Aristocracy and Latin

Now we know what has been sapping the Yale democracy: It is that pestilent badge of privilege, the entrance requirement in Latin.

The Yale Alumni Weekly says so, and believes it. Its current number contains an article, supported by editorial comment, and headed, "Is Yale's Democracy in Danger?" by Prof. Corwin of the Sheffield Committee on Entrance Examinations. It states that the "rigid maintenance of this requirement by Yale College is restricting admission from the high school and encouraging that from the special fitting school". Only the sons of prosperous parents, as a rule, prepare at the fitting schools. Therefore the requirement should be dropped.

Might not the high schools be accused of impairing Yale's democracy by refusing to teach the young democrats Latin, and filling their courses with frills? What if the high schools should abandon history, mathematics, and the modern languages—would the salvation of the nation's democracy lie in the discarding of these useful studies in its higher institutions of learning?

There were some sticklers for tradition who caviled when the compulsory Greek requirement was dropped at Yale. But Greek, while a valuable constituent of the English language, was not its flesh and blood like Latin. Latin is called a "dead" language. It lives, nevertheless, in the tissues of the French, Italian, and Spanish, and it is the muscular part of English. It is too bad that the study that develops a sense of the rich connotations of their

native tongue should be surrendered to the sons of the wealthy in favored schools. But whose fault is it? Is it that of the colleges that are still brave enough to insist that their undergraduates shall be prepared in the rudiments of this study?

The primary and secondary schools of the country are plainly lowering their standards. The grammar grades are graduating pupils who were not taught the sequence of the alphabet and cannot find words in the dictionary. The high schools are giving up one study after another that is really difficult in a chase after subjects that possess the magic property of "interesting" the pupils. It is a flabby philosophy that runs real democracy into the ground.

The following appeared in the *Democrat and Chronicle*, Rochester, on February 1 last:

Dean Mortimer E. Cooley, of the engineering department of the University of Michigan, who was in this city last night for the Michigan alumni dinner, was asked his opinion of the recent changes in the entrance requirements for the science and engineering departments of Cornell, Rochester and other colleges throughout the country involving a return to the older classical ideals of preparation.

"I am heartily in favor of the change", was the reply. "For years Greek and Latin have been accepted as suitable preparation for students of engineering at Michigan and not only accepted, but preferred. The very best engineering graduates have been classically trained men. We want all of them we can get."

There seems to be a general impression that the so-called vocational studies, those apparently connected directly with the future work of the student, are of first importance for engineering; but we prefer as students of engineering broad-gauged men whose horizon has been extended and developed by a study of the humanities.

On the whole, no course of preparation has been developed equal in this respect to the study of Latin and Greek. I expect to see in the next few years a strong reaction in their favor. We want, I repeat, all the men we can get with just that training."

When asked to what extent practical use is made of modern languages in the engineering department, Dean Cooley said:

"I believe that every graduate should have some German and French in college for their cultural value. The only modern language that has any distinctly practical value is Spanish."

In the *Democrat and Chronicle*, Rochester, under date of December 30, 1913, there had appeared a long article under the caption, Classics are to give Access to Science Courses. Some extracts follow:

One of the most important announcements in the annual catalogue of the University of Rochester, soon to be distributed, has to do with a change in the entrance requirements for the science course. Heretofore the university catalogue has expressed a preference for modern languages as entrance credentials. In the future Latin and Greek will be accepted by the university as meeting in full the entrance requirements in languages for the science as well as for the arts course. This is indicative of the growing tendency in colleges to recognize the practical value of preparation in Greek for a science course.

To the student preparing for college such a change in the entrance requirements is of great importance.

In this matter Rochester is adopting a policy recently put into operation at Cornell University and the University of Michigan. These institutions have recognized that the study of Greek, practically and from the standpoint of the mental discipline it gives, is of fully equal value to the modern languages as a preparation for the study of science. The practical result of the change will be that students preparing for college will no longer be compelled to decide three years in advance what college course they intend to take. Many have been unable to take Greek because it was not recognized in the catalogue as a subject that would aid them in gaining admission to a science course. . . .

Two considerations that have been factors in bringing about the change are that the preparation for any college course should be general, not special, and that a thorough mastery of a few fundamental subjects is preferable to a specialized preparatory course.

"The faculty of the University of Rochester has admitted to the science course in individual cases students who have brought satisfactory credentials of preparation in classical studies in high schools", President Rush Rhees said yesterday. "This has been done for the reason that the experience of the faculty has shown that no course of secondary training yet developed has proved itself equal to the classical training as preparation for college studies. This is true whether the college studies are to be a continuance of the classical studies of the high school or whether the student intends to go into the radically different field of modern science.

The forthcoming issue of the catalogue will make a definite statement that Greek is one of the studies accepted by us as preparation for the science course. This statement applies to all of the groups of the science course except that of mechanical engineering". . . .

Professor Dodge, of the university department of biology, strongly advocates Greek as a preparation for the science student.

"I am very glad to have the definite statement made in the catalogue as to the acceptability of Greek as an admission subject for the science courses", said he. "There are so many scientific terms that come from Greek roots that, with a moderate Greek vocabulary, the student of the sciences will have his work much lightened. A great trouble in the teaching of a science is that the student must commit many terms to memory, whereas if he has a knowledge of the derivation of the scientific words it is easy for him to remember their meanings. In physics, biology and other sciences you find that the greater number of the terms come from the Greek.

We pay very little attention to a high school course in a science. In our courses we start at the beginning, just as if the student had no high school course.

One year of Greek is of great practical value to the student of science. I should like nothing better than to see at least a year of it required from every student entering the science courses. I should rather see such a preparation for a science course than preparation in the elementary science work itself".

Dr. Mason D. Gray, of the East High School, Rochester, and President of the Classical Section of the New York State Teachers Association, to whose kindness I owe these clippings from the Rochester paper, explains more clearly the signifi-

cance of the matters referred to in them, as follows:

The University of Rochester, which up to this year has admitted Greek and Latin only in the Arts Course, has required the modern languages in the Science Course and has made it impossible for a student of Latin to enter the Engineering Course, will in its new catalogue express an emphatic preference for the Classics as a preparation for the Arts Course, state that any combination of languages admitting to the Arts Course will admit to the Science Course and suggest that the five language units recommended for the Engineering Course consist of three years of Latin and two of Greek. The University of Michigan will in its approaching catalogue express a preference for the full classical course as a preparation for the Engineering Course.

C.K.

NEW HUMANITIES FOR OLD¹

Nearly five generations of men have come and gone since this Society sprang into life, its purpose the nurture and encouragement of liberal studies by a public recognition of those whose young steps have begun worthily to tread the pathways of the humanities. The idols that men rear and worship change as men change. And time sheds tears or bestows mockery on the broken images that have been but are no more. No symbol that has roused the spirit of human devotion can be a thing wholly unworthy or without significance. It is of these idols in education, fallen or yet upright, that I wish to speak to you. And I wish especially to dwell on the spirit that once reared them on their pedestals and brought them honest devotees, rather than to dilate on the iconoclasm that has shattered their beauties in indiscriminate ruin.

Retrospect is the privilege of age, prophecy the foible of youth. I can lay claim to your indulgence for neither. The present is only a passing link in the swiftly running chain of time. It fixes the eye but for a moment. He that neglects the promises and the warnings of the present as to things to come, as to things which he may help to shape in their coming, is already floating, a mere piece of wreckage, on the ocean of time.

The humanities, the liberal arts: these words call up to the minds of many of us, who are not wholly unlettered, a thing in some mysterious manner connected with the study of the Classics, a something opposed to science and to the study of nature, a something very impractical and very desirable to possess, if you do not lose bread and butter by it; a thing much talked of at Commencements, and happily, for the most part, forgotten meanwhile. Indeed, the popular conception of the humanities is not unlike an Eton boy's knowledge of Latin and Greek, not so much a definite concep-

¹This address was delivered before the Phi Beta Kappa Society of Columbia University, on June 1, 1913. Professor Schelling is Professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania.